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THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN RESOLVING  
FOREST LAND MANAGEMENT CONFLICTS

It gives me great pleasure to help dedicate the largest forestry research laboratory of its kind in the country. And I can't think of a more appropriate location than Corvallis, in one of the nation's most important forested regions and at the campus of a major University with an outstanding forestry school. The development of this lab is a major achievement and one that reflects the importance of this Region's very valuable forest resources.

As Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research and Education, I share with you an abiding interest in research and educational programs and their inseparable link to conservation and good resource management. And, I believe that research has a vital role in resolving the forest land management conflicts which beset us in the 1970's.

I've long admired the Forest Service research organization--the Forest Products Laboratory, the eight regional experiment stations and the many laboratories in all parts of the country. This dynamic research program has contributed much to the growth and productivity of American Forests and to the resolution of management problems. But, a number of factors make this role even more important in the future:

1. Demand for forest products continues to grow. To meet demands, timber production may have to be increased by 73 percent by the year 2000, and more than 100 percent by 2020. We must find ways to increase growth on the more than 500 million acres of forest land now producing at far below their biological potential.

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Remarks of Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research and Education, presented by Rex Resler of the Forest Service before the Dedication of the Forestry Sciences Laboratory, in Corvallis, Oregon, on October 19, 1977

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2. While demands are rising, the commercial forest land base is actually shrinking. The latest analysis shows that land capable of growing timber is steadily being diverted to other uses. During the decade of the 60's, commercial forest land decreased by 8 million acres. And forest survey reports indicate that the drop is continuing. Thus, more goods and services will have to be produced from fewer acres of forestland.

3. Competing demands on forest resources are placing new pressure on the land--and on land managers. Today, on many acres, increasing the output of one product means decreasing--or even eliminating--production of another.

4. To all these factors, we must add the concern about the quality of our living environment. The environmental concerns spawned in the 60's and 70's are now forcing a second look at some of our resource practices, and requiring us to develop new technology that will remain environmentally-sound over the long-term.

Increased population growth assures us that these conflicts will continue over the next several decades--perhaps even longer.

Although the conflicts have grown in the last 15 years, the basic problem remains the same--How can we increase timber harvesting and other consumptive uses of forest resources, and at the same time, maintain a quality environment? I, for one, believe that this is possible.

Nowhere are the conflicts more visible than in the Pacific Northwest, where there is keen competition for timber resources and equal concern for preservation of wilderness and scenic areas and outdoor recreation opportunities.



There are major conservation issues in this State--many of which will or have already reached my desk--that need to be resolved. For example, the conflict over timber supply and the role of the National Forests and private lands in maintaining harvest levels, the review of roadless areas, reforestation problems, the controversy over forest management and water quality in Portland's Bull Run watershed, the issue of pumice mining in the Three Sisters Wilderness Area, concern over the use of herbicides, chemical pesticides, and many others.

All of these controversies tend to polarize interests--for example, lumbermen against environmentalists, in ways that are often more destructive than constructive. These issues should be resolved as quickly as possible, with as good an understanding of the situation as possible. If conservation issues were played out in a strictly unemotional environment, this might be easy, but the setting is quite different.

The conflict is played out across the country and involves many people in many different organizations--people with very different values and objectives. It is a conflict played out in an atmosphere that occasionally resembles a three-ring circus complete with clowns, jugglers, tight rope walkers, acrobats, and lion tamers.

In the midst of all this, research has a vital role that has often been downplayed and only recently recognized as crucial to resolving resource conflicts.

There are no easy solutions to conflict. But I do know one thing--there must be full public participation. Government agencies especially need to develop better methods for public involvement and for gathering



ideas, facts, data, and inviting the opinions of the concerned interest groups and individuals.

One group that has been poorly represented in the past is the scientific community. Scientists not only have their own research information at hand, they also have access to and have the ability to more accurately interpret the scientific literature in a given field. Researchers are sitting on a vast data and knowledge base that is seldom, if ever, tapped in an organized way in the decision-making process. Researchers are very good at science, often not so good at communication. And those responsible for decision-making--administrators, legislators, and others--are not knowledgeable about the methods of science. Often they don't even know where to look for qualified subject matter specialists or what to ask once they find them.

Not always, but in many cases, conflict can be resolved through a better understanding of the facts. For example, questions over the use of DDT and other persistent chlorinated pesticides might have been resolved earlier if we had known more about the environmental impacts sooner, or if people using these chemicals had been more willing to believe the growing body of scientific literature that pointed to their persistence in and hazard to the environment.

Forest Service scientists have been working for a long time to resolve problems associated with the use of pesticides. For example, a cooperative USDA program throughout the West is now engaged in a search for alternatives for DDT for one forest insect--the Douglas-fir tussock moth. Already their efforts, backstopped by years of work by Forest Service scientists at this Laboratory and elsewhere, have resulted in significant progress.



And we are not interested only in insect control. An entire pest management system is being developed that will enable forest land managers to plan ahead and manage forests to reduce the likelihood that an outbreak will occur.

In this cooperative effort, scientists are actively engaged in the resolution of conflict through development of new insect control methods that will be acceptable to both forest managers and a public that is ever more environmentally conscious.

There are many more examples. The controversy over the use of 2,4,5-T as a herbicide in forestry and agriculture might be more quickly resolved if we knew more about the effects of that chemical, and its dioxin contaminants in the environment.

Conflicts over timber harvest practices are influenced by data gathered through the timber inventories conducted by the Forest Service. This information is vitally needed in the making of timber harvest policy on a national scale. Lumbermen today are using Forest Service data to predict declining harvests from private lands and to push for accelerated harvests from the public lands. It is essential that our base of data on timber growth and yield be accurate, up-to-date, and available in a way that is useful to those that need it.

The same is true of information about reforestation practices, the increased yield that can be expected from genetic improvement of tree stocks, basic biological and ecological information that describes the interrelationship of plants, animals, and man in the forest ecosystem, the benefits that can be expected from forest fertilization, information about the nutrient flow in forest ecosystems, about the



effects of intensive management on future productivity. It is absolutely essential that forest policy reflect the very best information we have currently available.

In his environmental message, President Carter asked for a study of all cooperative forestry programs and recommendations for improving forestry on private lands. A number of the recommendations involved research, and I'd like to address several of them now.

---Greater use of the scientific capabilities of the colleges and universities is desirable to strengthen the total research effort in forest and range-related fields.

---The historic primary emphasis on timber management research needs to be modified to include greater relative emphasis on environmental/ecological, wildlife and other aspects of resource use.

---Basic research has lagged in relation to applied research and should be greatly accelerated.

---And, there must be better planning at the national level directed toward meeting long range public renewable resource goals.

The Department concurs with the need to broaden its research programs.

The Farm Bill, signed by President Carter on September 29, contains authorizations for grant programs to expand university participation in agricultural and forestry research. Draft bills pending in both the Senate and House contain authorities for grant programs specific to forestry research. This would support basic research. We also feel that such basic research needs to be mission-oriented to insure that successful results will furnish a basis for applied forestry research not only on timber production, but on a broader base of research on non-timber forest values.



Provisions for forestry extension in the Farm Bill and in Congressman Weaver's extension forestry bill indicate that the Congress is prepared to support augmented forestry and natural resources extension programs. What we really need to do now is to put our act together to build a strong and workable forestry and natural resources extension program that includes any and all institutions and agencies, federal, state, and private, who can get the right technology to the right people, large and small forest land owners and users.

Research programs must be planned in such a way that we increase our fund of data about issues that are critical in the minds of the public. Forestry professionals need to get research information into use faster. And public agencies interested in the resolution of conflict must be more careful to include scientists and research information in their public involvement efforts.

We need also to find better ways to interpret the work of scientists. Sometimes the problem is not that the data base is inadequate, but that the information is not presented or interpreted in a way that the average person can understand. For example, the public may be confused when they read testimony from different scientists on environmental matters, and it appears to conflict dramatically. It is bewildering to hear that one expert is not afraid to eat DDT, and another says DDT is killing brown pelicans off the California coast. Who is right? To a public uneducated in the ways of science, it does not seem possible that both may be right.

We are here dedicating a federal research facility. But this is only a part of the scientific community in forestry and only part of



the effort represented here today. The physical proximity of the Forestry Sciences Laboratory with the forestry school of the Oregon State University campus provides strong ties between federal researchers and their colleagues at the University, strengthening our ability collectively to conduct effective research. Opportunities for cooperative research, for grants to the Universities, and for forestry extension are improved. A scientific community is created that is both competitive and complementary with a healthy environment for professional give-and-take of ideas.

In addition, ties with the University have another benefit. There is a strong orientation on most campuses toward conservation and preservation which provides a balance in forestry against the voice of dominant-use interests. All in all, it is a healthy way to run a scientific community, promoting objectivity, balance, and integrity in science information.

We are now in the process of strengthening our ties with universities through development of a joint USDA-University National Program of Forestry Research. Four regional workshops were held throughout the United States earlier this year--and a National conference is scheduled in January--to facilitate development of a research program that will meet the needs outlined in the Resources Planning Act. Through the involvement of many people, this program will outline research needs for 1980 and 1985, provide a sound basis for research funding, and work toward improving the situation for many of the types of problems I have been discussing here.

I guess what I am saying in all this is that there is a much broader role for scientists to play in the resolution of important



conservation issues than they have ever had in the past. First, we must make sure that research programs are truly responsive to current trends, so that the resulting data base will provide the information we need in the resolution of important current issues. And finally, research information must be passed on and interpreted in a way that will be useful not only to forest resource managers but also to an interested public and policy makers.

There are always those who would favor a conservative conservation policy, leaning toward environmental protection at all costs. And there are others who will lean toward utilization and economic development, leaving the environment to fend for itself. But I believe the majority of reasonable people will be able to agree on the facts if they are carefully gathered and presented. There is not one of us who would want to cause environmental damage that would detract from the health and enjoyment of future generations. The problem is in sorting out what is fact and what is fiction in environmental matters.

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